



1st Symposium on Southeast Asian Security September 12-14, 2010



Public Affairs Bangkok, working with U.S. Pacific Command, invited sixteen security experts from Southeast Asia and the PACOM staff to the inaugural Symposium on Southeast Asia Security (SSEAS) in Bangkok, Thailand. This two day program under the theme of “Non-Traditional Security Issues” is the first such symposium to focus on Southeast Asian issues. It is modeled after the similar Symposium on Northeast Asia Security (SNEAS) as well as Symposium on East Asian Security (SEAS) which has been occurring annually since the mid 1980’s. The symposium includes briefings and discussions between the participants and a wide range of government and private organizations, including the U.S Embassy

Bangkok, The Institute of International Studies (ISIS), and Chulalongkorn University. These discussions focused on a diverse range of security issues including, energy security and climate change, human security, transnational crime, food and health security, and internal conflicts.

Highlights of the week included a wonderful welcome reception at the Deputy Chief of Mission, Judith Cefkin’s home.



Next was a discussion with Dr. Suchit Bunbongkarn who is Professor Emeritus of the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University as well as Senior Fellow at ISIS Thailand.

Having been a member of the National Legislative Assembly, his insights were of great interest and value. The participants were also given a tour of the Center for Strategic Studies, National Defense College where they attended an introductory briefing followed by a Q&A dialogue with Thai military faculty. At Chulalongkorn University, a very informative briefing was presented by Dr. Carl Middleton on food security as it relates to weighing the trade offs between the importance of fishing in the Mekong River and the need for generating hydro-electric power for the developing nations along its length. It was very thought provoking to learn how what one Mekong country does affects those of neighbor countries and to what a significant extent. The final roundtable discussion concerning the history of, and possible solutions to, Thailand's internal southern conflict was extremely objective in its approach and really brought to light the complexity and nuances of the situation.



The seminar's participants, who come from military, government, and academic backgrounds, represented organizations such as the Laotian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Institute of Strategic Studies (ISIS), Malaysia, Royal Thai Directorate of Intelligence, Cambodian Secretariat of the National Counter Terrorism Committee, as well as PACOM staff from J3, J5, and J9, to name a few.

The timing of the symposium was fortunate in that some of the topics and presenters had information very relevant to a project Brig Gen Uhle was involved with. Plans to continue this program in subsequent years are in the works although the host nation will vary from year to year.

